



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ALABAMA DEPT. OF PUBLIC SAFETY RECEIVES \$305,000 AS RESULT OF ASSET SHARING

This is the first bulk currency conviction in the Middle District of Alabama

MONTGOMERY, Ala.—The Alabama Department of Public Safety (DPS) has received more than \$305,000 as a result of asset sharing from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

In January 2004, Alabama state troopers stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation on Interstate Highway 85. Subsequent investigation revealed \$436,585 in U.S. currency concealed in a hidden compartment built into the vehicle's floor. ICE and Alabama Bureau of Investigation Agents responded to the scene.

Enrique Delgado and Sofia De La Paz-Lopez were arrested and charged with bulk smuggling of U.S. currency. In addition to the money, investigators seized the 2003 Peugeot vehicle that Delgado was operating. Delgado and Lopez are Mexican citizens temporarily living in the United States.

"This case illustrates the outstanding cooperation between ICE, state and local law enforcement. Because of such outstanding cooperation, smugglers and other criminals are discovering how difficult it is for them to hide their illegal activities from authorities," said Michael A. Holt, special agent-in-charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in New Orleans. "We are dedicated to identifying and dismantling criminal operations wherever and whenever we find them." Holt heads the ICE New Orleans Office of Investigations which includes the five-state area of: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Delgado pleaded guilty to bulk currency smuggling violations and Lopez pleaded guilty to having knowledge and concealing the commission of a felony in May 2004. Both Delgado and De La Paz-Lopez were sentenced to 13 months in prison. After completing their sentences, they were turned over to ICE agents and placed into removal proceedings. This was the first bulk currency smuggling case to be prosecuted in the Middle Judicial District of Alabama.

The Alabama Department of Public Safety received \$305,436.71 March 10 as a result of asset sharing for their participation in the original stop and subsequent investigation.

ICE's Asset Forfeiture Program, initiated under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, provides funding to state and local law enforcement agencies that participate in ICE investigations that lead to seizures and forfeitures. The law allows the government to take illegal profits from crimes such as narcotics, smuggling, money laundering, and fraud.

“Seizures such as these allow the government to turn the table on criminal organizations by using their own profits to enhance local enforcement efforts” said Holt. “Anytime law enforcement can use illegal profits against the bad guys, the entire community benefits. Cash smugglers and smugglers of any type are a threat to our national security and public safety both in big cities and rural America alike.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Brown, Middle District of Alabama, prosecuted this case.

Besides working with local law enforcement, ICE needs assistance from the general public. People can report suspicious activity by calling the DHS nationwide tip line at 1 866 DHS-2ICE. Trained law enforcement personnel answer the tip line 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Information gathered at the tip line is forwarded to ICE field offices around the nation.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.